

Construction grammar goes global: Syntactic alternations, schematization, and collostructional diversity in World Englishes

In this paper, we explore how Construction grammar (Goldberg 2006) can explain differences in the use of syntactic variants across varieties of English at different stages of linguistic evolution. We analyze two well-known syntactic phenomena in English—the dative (*give me that/give that to me*) and particle placement (*pick up the book/pick the book up*) alternations—in nine varieties from the ICE corpora: ICE-GB, ICE-CAN, ICE-NZ, ICE-IND, ICE-SIN, ICE-PHI, ICE-IRE, ICE-JA. We show that 1) the more an alternation is lexically entrenched, i.e. occurs with the same lexical items, the more likely it is to exhibit cross-varietal variation, and 2) an alternation's degree of entrenchment in a given variety correlates inversely with that variety's placement along the path of development in Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model.

The Dynamic Model predicts that innovations in developing varieties of English are typically placed at the syntax-lexicon interface, where new patterns emerge as differences in the habitual associations of constructions with specific lexical items. We expand on recent work in this vein through an investigation of syntactic alternations from both a variationist and a collostructional perspective. Multivariate analysis reveals that the dative exhibits relatively little cross-varietal differences in the factors governing speakers' choice of alternate, while the choice of particle placement is constrained more by verb-particle collocational patterns in less advanced varieties, e.g. Indian E, and more by deeper processing factors, e.g. end weight, in more advanced varieties. In addition, we find that less advanced varieties show higher type frequencies and stronger associations of verbs with specific alternates, indicating that speakers' representations of alternations in these varieties are more substantive, i.e. concrete, and less schematic, i.e. abstract, than in more advanced varieties.

References

- Goldberg, Adele E. 2006. *Constructions at Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Schneider, Edgar. 2007. *Postcolonial English: Varieties Around the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.